

# Signs of Heart Attack and Stroke

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February is American Heart Month, making it a good time to learn more about cardiac arrest and stroke, the number one and number three killers, respectively, of Americans. According to the American Heart Association, many cardiac arrest deaths can be avoided with timely and correct actions taken at the first sign of a stroke or a heart attack.

While the advancement of science and medicine has provided new drugs and therapies that can help prevent and stop heart attacks and stroke, it is still vitally important to recognize the signs of a heart attack or stroke. Every second one receives medical attention in the event of a heart attack or stroke offers a greater chance of recovery and prevention of disability.

Read these lists of typical warning signs of a heart attack or stroke. While only a few warning signs in each may be present, they may still be an indicator that something is wrong. Be on the safe side and seek medical attention immediately.

## Heart Attacks

Keep in mind that most heart attacks start slowly, resulting in minor pain or discomfort. However, even minor discomfort can be a sign of a problem. Seek medical attention if you experience any of the following:

- Chest discomfort. Typically appears as discomfort in the center of the chest lasting more than a few minutes, or pain that comes and goes. Often the feeling resembles pressure, squeezing, pain or fullness.
- Discomfort in the upper body. Often pain or discomfort is experienced in one or both of the arms, the back, neck, jaw or stomach.
- Shortness of breath. Often this accompanies or precedes chest discomfort.
- Nausea, breaking out in a cold sweat and/or lightheadedness. These may occur independently or in conjunction with any of the above symptoms.

## Strokes

Strokes tend to happen suddenly. Typical signs of a stroke include sudden occurrences of the following:

- Numbness or weakness in the face, arm or leg. Often this will happen on one side of the body.
- Unexplained confusion and comprehension, and language difficulty.
- Difficulty seeing in one or both eyes.
- Difficulty walking, loss of balance, coordination problems or dizziness.
- Severe headache with no known cause.

If you suspect someone has suffered cardiac arrest (he or she is unresponsive, is not breathing normally, does not move or cough, or shows no signs of a pulse, call local emergency immediately. Begin CPR or use an automated external defibrillator (AED) if you or someone nearby knows how to do so.

For more information on American Heart Month, contact:

American Heart Association

[www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)

(800) 242-8721

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